

THE HISTORY OF THE SHARON ARTS CENTER MEMORIAL GARDEN

The initial landscaping for the new school building was designed by Kristian Fenderson, a specialist in native and naturalistic plantings, who was able to incorporate a few rhododendron saved from the old site. The front garden plan was implemented by Chuck Simpson, along with an irrigation system, in the summer of 2002. Ned Eldredge, a trustee, did much of the "hardscaping," grading and drainage of the site, including construction of a retaining wall. Kitty Carleton, Nancy Massey and Janet Schaefer, trustees all, were active members of the landscaping committee.

The carefully considered Memorial Garden finally became a reality in 2006, honoring the many who gave so much of themselves to the Art Center, and to those who were nurtured by its teachers. Funds were raised through memorial gifts, celebrating as well the almost 60 years that the SAC has been serving the Monadnock region.

This beautiful Memorial Garden was officially dedicated on June 23, 2006. The ceremony was well-attended by family and friends of current students as well as those the garden memorializes. Board Chair David Howe spoke and passed a list of honorees, giving each person there a chance to read a name, often recalling poignant anecdotes of those whose lives have so deeply touched this arts community. A prayer of dedication, a guided walk and an informal reception ended the ceremony.

Bill Parker of Parker Garden Design worked with the Memorial Garden Committee of Kitty Carleton, Deb De Cicco, Lin Hart, Nancy Massey and Janet Schaefer, to create a wonderfully functional and handsome setting for the new building.

Using the original plant materials, transplanted when necessary, the design includes a circular stone patio ringed with engraved granite pavers donated by Janet Schaefer, from which a cinder path curves around existing tall hemlocks leading to a picnic table. A marble bench and equine weathervane sculpture by Scott Cunningham were donated in memory of Marguerite Shaw. "Peter's peonies" were transplanted from Kitty Carleton's garden in memory of her husband. A sloped water garden, using the natural runoff of rain water from the building, elegantly solved a moisture problem near the front entrance.

This Memorial Garden was created for, and is used by, students and staff alike and honors and reflects the spirit of art in our community. It depends on volunteers to keep it "shining." Hours donated in "tender loving care" can be applied toward our "Earn & Learn" program to defray course fees in the school. Engraved memorial pavers may be purchased to add to the patio ring and help keep us beautiful. All the plants are labeled, and they combine to put on a special show from early Spring through the Fall. Come and enjoy!